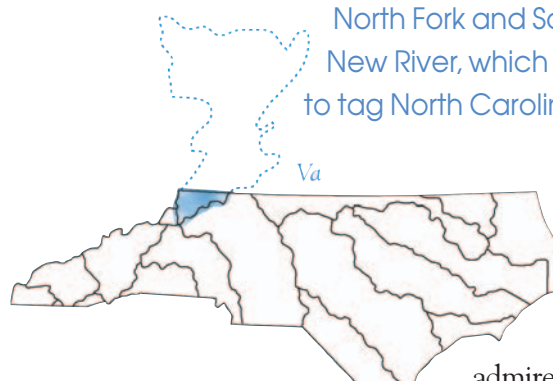


NEW RIVER BASIN

The New River is thought to be one of the oldest rivers in the world. Some geologists estimate its age at 300 million years old. This clean, clear river begins as two streams on the western side of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Watauga County. The

North Fork and South Fork converge in Ashe County as the New River, which flows northward into Virginia and loops back to tag North Carolina before continuing into Virginia.



The river winds and cuts its way through metamorphic rock over a billion years old. But its age is not all that distinguishes the river. A sense of proud ownership also surrounds the New, which has been embraced by residents in the basin and admirers from around the country.

In 1998, President Clinton visited and named the New River an American Heritage River, an honor he bestowed on only 13 other rivers in the nation. The designation brings with it federally funded, community-driven initiatives for protecting the river and for guiding sustainable

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growth in the basin. The lower South Fork New River and the North Carolina portion of the New River—26 miles—are designated as National Scenic Rivers. That stretch is also classified by the state as Outstanding Resource Waters because of its recreational and ecological importance and its excellent water quality.

Stewardship is a tradition in the New River Basin—in the early 1970s, residents banded together to prevent dams from being built on the New in North Carolina and Virginia. The river's multiple scenic designations now ensure that the river will continue to flow freely.

New River



profile:

Total miles of streams and rivers: 918 miles

Municipalities within basin: 6

Counties within basin: 3

Size: 752 square miles

Population: 49,693 (2000 U.S. Census)

Tiny Turtle

More bog turtles live in the New River Basin than any other river basin in the state. Weighing only 4 ounces, the bog turtle is one of the rarest turtles in North America and is federally listed as a threatened species. Destruction of habitat and illegal collection of turtles for the pet trade have caused populations to dwindle.



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